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1975/04/29

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH CONGRESSIONAL
BIPARTISAN LEADERSHIP

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, April 29, 1975
11:30 a.m.

PLACE: The White House

President: [after outlining the situation leading up to the helicopter evacuation.] The helicopter operation has been and is going on and we don't want any break in that, Jim. Henry, will you summarize.

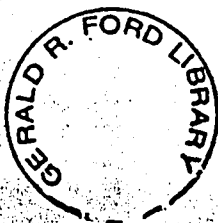
Kissinger: Tan Son Nhut came under rocket attack yesterday and its continued use is problematical. The President ordered one more day for C-130s to evacuate 8,000 high-risk Vietnamese and DAO people, and thinning out of the Embassy to the absolute minimum. Those remaining were to be helicopter-pulled tonight. That order was overcome by chaos at the airport. The President then ordered the helicopter evacuation. There are only 89 at DAO, 700 still at Embassy. We don't know how many there are Americans. So far, 1237 from the Embassy and 4100 (?) from DAO. These figures are changing every few minutes. So far there is no hostile action and no retaliation so far as I know -- except for the two Marines killed. There has been no action to interfere except mortar fire.

Our effort all along has been to stabilize the situation, to permit, first, saving American lives; evacuation of high-risk Vietnamese; to bring about a transition with as little chaos and bloodshed as possible. It is too early to say, but if it goes as it is now, we will have achieved our objectives. We will have evacuated about 45,000 high-risk Vietnamese and through third parties we obtained a lull which allowed governmental adjustments in as orderly a manner as possible. The evacuation should be over in an hour and a half if all goes well.

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By let, NARA, Date 11/24/00



~~TOP SECRET~~ - XGDS (3)
CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER

Declassified

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President: There were no operational problems once the lift got started. One problem has been Americans coming in out of the woodwork. Until yesterday, we avoided a panic of the Vietnamese, and then we had to move to helicopter evacuation.

Jim --

Schlesinger: There was one return of ground fire, and one A-7 and one CH-46 were lost (not operational). We have picked up substantial equipment, including a number of aircraft. We had planned for a fixed-wing evacuation and thus planned for mixed loads. Since they had been mixed, we loaded them all.

Albert: Have we been ordered out [by the Government]?

President: Yes. At about 1:30 this morning.

Kissinger: It came in two stages. Last night it was the DAO. This morning they escalated and asked all Americans to leave. This may have had the benefit of keeping down ARVN disaffection since the evacuation looked like a response to a request.

President: At the NSC last night, I directed that all should come out in one operation. We do, however, have to give people on the ground some flexibility.

Byrd: Over what period was the equipment brought out?

Schlesinger: Over the recent period. We got an evacuation of VNAF and the Navy and only a few high value items from Bien Hoa.

Mansfield: Now that we are out, is Minh negotiating under Article 12?

Kissinger: He has offered to negotiate from the outset. But the DRV has constantly escalated its demands. First they said Thieu had to go. Then Thieu left and they said it had to be Minh, then to stop military action, then a whole new administrative structure. My guess is there will be a dismantling followed by some kind of tripartite government in form.

Burton: Could we delay the bill and get an assurance the evacuation authority would not be used?

[End]

